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ABSTRACT

This report addresses the question of how many economically and educationally disadvantaged children do and do not receive Title I services. The study involves the following: (1) a national representative sample of 242 elementary schools; (2) the documentation of students' receipt of regular and compensatory services provided by Title I in these schools; (3) the administration of academic achievement tests through interviews with parents of 14,158 students of each family's economic status; and (5) the linking of a child's achievement level, family economic characteristics, and receipt of educational services. Results indicate that Title I and other compensatory services are moderately well focused on individual needy children. However, there are many needy students not now being served and some who are not needy but who are receiving Title I services. (Author/AM)

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STUDENT ECONOMIC BACKGROUND, ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND SELECTION FOR COMPENSATORY SERVICES

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Abstract

"How many economically and educationally disadvantaged children do and do not receive services from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act?" In response to this question asked by Congress, the Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation of the U.S. Office of Education conducted a special study. The results of this study showed that of the 20 million public elementary school students in grades 1-6, the following percentages are selected to receive compensatory services:

Overall

- 15% are selected to receive services from Title I while another 10% are selected to receive compensatory services supported by other Federal, State and local sources of funds.

By Income Status

- 4.2 million children are from low income backgrounds -- 29% of these students are selected for Title I while another 11% are selected for compensatory services supported from other sources
- 15.8 million are from non-low income backgrounds -- 11% of these students are selected for Title I while another 10% are selected for compensatory services from other sources

By Achievement Status

- One-third of all the students can be classified as low achievers — 30% of these students are selected for Title I while another 14% are selected for compensatory services from other sources
- Two-thirds of all the students can be classified as non-low achievers — 7% of these students are selected for Title I while another 8% are selected for compensatory services from other sources.

By Income and Achievement Status

Income/Achievement Status	Number of Students (millions)	Percent (by Row) Selected for Compensatory Services from: Title I	Other
Low Income/Low Achievement	2.4	39	13
Non-Low Income/Low Achievement	4.2	24	15
Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	1.8	16	7
Non-Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	11.6	6	8

Other Results

- The relationship between low income and low achievement was strong enough to show that where there were high concentrations of low income children there too could be found high concentrations of low achieving children.
  - However, substantial concentrations of low achieving students could also be found where there were very small concentrations of low income children.
- Various definitions of low income and low achievement were employed. For the narrowest definitions used, 34% of the students selected for Title I were from non-low-income backgrounds and were non-low achievers. For the broadest definitions used a comparable figure was 8%.

Student Economic Background, Achievement Status and Selection for Compensatory Services

In the Education Amendments of 1974 (Public Law 93-380), Congress directed the Commissioner of Education to report on the numbers of children from low income families and on the numbers of low achieving children who receive or do not receive services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.* This summary presents selected results from a study conducted to respond to this request as well as to examine a number of other issues that are related to Congressional concerns regarding criteria for the allocation of Title I funds (Breglio, et al., 1978). These results are organized around questions pertaining to current practices for selecting children for services, the results of such practices, and how they might be improved.

1. How are funds disbursed and students selected for Title I services currently?

Funds are disbursed to counties based on a Census count of (1) the number of children from poverty** families plus (2) two-thirds of the children from families receiving payments under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program (whose incomes fall above the poverty line).*** When school district boundaries do not coincide with county boundaries, the State determines how the funds should be further distributed on the basis of poverty-related information.†

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* See Section 417(a)(2) of the General Education Provisions Act as amended by Section 506(a)(3)(C) of P.L. 93-380.

** The "poverty" index is based on the cost of a minimally adequate diet and on the proportion of income that a low-income family spends on food relative to non-food items. It provides different estimates for age and sex of the head of the family, the number of children and adults, and according to whether or not the family lives on a farm. Allowances are not made for the cost of living in different geographical areas. (It is called the Orshansky index after its originator).

***Other factors entering into the allocation process but which will not be discussed here are: a count of the number of children in institutions for the neglected or delinquent or in publicly supported foster homes who attend public school; and, the State's average per pupil expenditure.

† In making these resolutions a State also relies on aggregate income or poverty data (e.g., number of families receiving AFDC payments).

Once a school district receives its allocation, it is required to rank all of its school attendance areas according to their concentrations of children from poor families. (They can define "poor" in a number of ways, including number of children participating in the school lunch program, number of children from families receiving AFDC payments, and family income, if available). Attendance areas that are at or above the district average are called its Title I eligible areas. The district may choose to provide compensatory services in all such areas or it may choose to focus on those areas that have the heaviest concentrations of children from poor families (these latter are called project areas).

Once the project areas have been identified the schools are to provide supplementary services to those of their students who have the greatest educational need without regard to the economic status of their family. Individual students are most often selected to receive services on the basis of teacher judgement, test scores when available and, on occasion, through other procedures.* As required by law (P.L. 89-10 as amended) and implemented through regulations therefore, Title I currently emphasizes both economic and educational criteria--economic information at the aggregate (county, district and school) level and educational information at the individual student level.

Before discussing the results of current funds allocation practice, we must briefly review the study done to investigate them. It involved (1) a nationally representative sample of 242 elementary schools (those having one or more of grades 1-6**), (2) the documentation in these schools of students' receipt of regular and compensatory services, (3) the administration of achievement tests*** during school year '76-77 to all children in these schools to ascertain their educational performance level, (4) the determination through interviews with parents of 14,158 students of each family's economic status, and (5) the linking of the three primary student descriptors on an individual child basis: his achievement level, the economic characteristics of his family, and his receipt of educational services.†

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* Thirty-six percent of the Title I districts report that they also use economic criteria as a guide in individual student selection even though they are not required to do so while 26% use other procedures in addition to test scores (NIE, September, 1977).

** Grade levels beyond the sixth were not included in the study because very few Title I services are provided to students in the higher grades (NIE, 1976). Kindergarten and pre-school children were not included in the study because of the difficulty in obtaining reliable paper and pencil test results from them.

***The Reading and Mathematics sections of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills were used. A basic skills index was formed by combining these two scales.

†This study formed part of a larger study which follows the same students over a period of years to ascertain how they benefit from their compensatory services.

2. What are the results of current practices for distributing funds as they affect individual children?

There are several ways in which the information used in this study differs from that used in regular program operations. First, the family economic information used in this study is from 1976 but the information used to make county level allocations is based on aggregate data from 1969 (viz. the 1970 census). Second, in deciding how funds should be distributed from the county to the school district level or in the identification of a district's Title I eligible schools, States and districts can and do use a variety of procedures and economic data. Each kind of data and procedure can yield estimates of "poor" children different from the measure used in this study (e.g., a count based on participation in the school lunch program may result in more students than a count based on poverty plus AFDC). Finally, in schools that receive Title I funds, services are provided to students who, in the judgment of their teachers, have the greatest educational need but in this study, student need is judged solely in terms of his/her performance on a standardized achievement test. These differences, as well as the dual criteria by which funds and services are provided, play an important role in the results that follow.

When the proportions of different kinds of students selected for services are discussed*, two comparisons are included: (1) those that pertain to all students (viz. all public elementary students regardless of whether or not the school they attend receives any compensatory funds); and (2) those that pertain to students who attend schools that receive Title I funds. This latter comparison is included to show how the kinds of students selected differ in schools that receive such funds.**

2.1 How many students are selected to receive compensatory services?

Of the 20 million public elementary school students in grades 1 through 6, 15% are selected to receive services from Title I while an additional 10% are selected to receive services from compensatory programs supported by other sources of funds (Federal, State or local programs).

- In schools that receive Title I funds, 22% of the students are selected to receive services under Title I while an additional 11% are selected to receive compensatory services supported by other funds.

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* The report (Breglio, et al., 1978) also examines other background characteristics of children selected i.e., age, sex, ethnic and geographic background, but they will not be summarized here. For additional discussions of this information see Hearings, Parts 16 and 19 listed in the References.

** The actual numbers are not included since the sampling plan was designed to yield estimates for the universe of all elementary schools, not Title I recipient schools.

- Only 12% of all public elementary school students attend a school that does not offer any compensatory services supported either by Title I or some other source.

2.2 How many low income students are selected to receive compensatory services?

4.2 million of the 20 million public elementary school students can be classified as being from current low-income backgrounds using the criteria employed in the Title I allocation formula*.

- 29% of all low income students are selected to receive services from Title I; an additional 11% are selected to receive compensatory services funded by other sources

  -- 11% of all students classified as not from low income backgrounds are selected to receive services from Title I while an additional 10% are selected to receive services funded by other sources.

- In schools that receive Title I funds, 25% of the students are classified as low income and 36% of these low-income students are selected to receive services from Title I. An additional 9% are selected to receive compensatory services from other sources.

  -- In schools that receive Title I funds, 75% of the students are classified as non-low income and 17% of these non-low-income students are selected to receive services from Title I. An additional 11% are selected to receive compensatory services from other sources.

- Only 7% of all low-income children attend a school that does not offer any compensatory services supported either by Title I or some other source.

- Students from low-income backgrounds are selected more often for Title I than are those from non-low income backgrounds by a margin of almost 3 to 1.

  -- However, due to the greater absolute numbers of students who can be classified as non-low income than low income, more of them are selected to receive services from Title I (1.7 million for non-low income vs. 1.2 million for low income).

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* Low income includes students from families classified as either poor or as receiving AFDC payments or the student resides in a foster home or in an institution for neglected or delinquent children but attends public school.

2.3 How many low achieving students are selected for compensatory services?

Of course, the number of students selected for compensatory services who are counted as low achievers varies according to the definition of low achievement. Results are summarized for three of the definitions used (students who score at one or more years below grade level, those who are in the lower third of the national achievement percentile distribution; and those in the lower half of the distribution).

With low achievement defined as students who are one or more years below grade level

- 23% of the 16,365,000 students in grades 2 through 6 can be classified as being "low achievers", and 31% of these "low achievers" are selected to receive compensatory services from Title I. Another 15% are selected for services supported from other sources.

  -- 10% of the students classified as "regular achievers" by this definition are selected for Title I while another 8% are selected for compensatory services from other sources.

- In schools that receive Title I funds, 25% of the students are classified as low achievers and of these low achievers 43% are selected to receive services under Title I while another 13% are selected to receive services supported by other sources.

  -- In these same schools 75% of the students are classified as regular achievers; 16% of the regular achievers are selected to receive services under Title I while another 10% are selected for services supported by other sources.

With low achievement defined as students who are in the lower third of the national achievement distribution.

- 30% of the students so classified are selected to receive services under Title I while another 14% are selected to receive services from other sources.

  -- 7% of the "regular achievers" are selected for Title I services while another 8% are selected for services from other sources.

- In Title I schools, 35% of the students are low achievers and 40% of the low achievers are selected to receive services from Title I. Another 13% are selected to receive services from other sources.

  -- In these same schools, 65% are regular achievers and 11% of the regular achievers are selected to receive Title I services. Another 9% are selected to receive services from other sources.

For low achievement defined as students who are in the lower half of the national achievement distribution.

- 12% of the students in this classification of "low achievers" are selected for Title I services while another 6% are selected for services from other sources.

  -- 2% of the regular achievers are selected for Title I while another 4% are selected for services from other sources.

- In schools that receive Title I funds, 52% of the students are classified as low achievers and 35% of them are selected for Title I services while another 12% are selected for services from other sources.

  -- 48% of the students are regular achievers; 7% of them are selected for Title I and another 9% are selected for services from other sources.

For any of the definitions of low achievement employed, only 12% of the nation's low-achieving students attend a school that does not offer any compensatory services supported either from Title I or from some other source.

2.4 What is the relationship between a student's economic background and his/her achievement status?

The relationship of the poverty status of a student's family with his/her achievement status varies with the definition of low achievement used.

- Using the child's performance at "one or more years below grade level" to define low achievement yields the result that almost 1 in 2 children from poor families are low achievers. Only about 1 in 5 children from non-poor families are low achievers. (However, such a grade level definition does not allow for the inclusion of first graders since they have not been in school long enough to fall that far behind.)

- When students in the lowest fourth of the achievement percentile distribution are defined as "low achievers", the achievement-poverty figures ave very similar to those cited above.

- Defining the students in the lowest third of the achievement percentile distribution as "low achievers", yields the finding that almost 3 in 5 poor children are low achievers. For the non-poor, about 3 in 10 are low achievers.

- Calling merely the lower half of the achievement percentile distribution "low achieving", one finds that 3 in 4 poor children are so classified. (However, among non-poor children about 1 in 2 are classified as low achieving.)

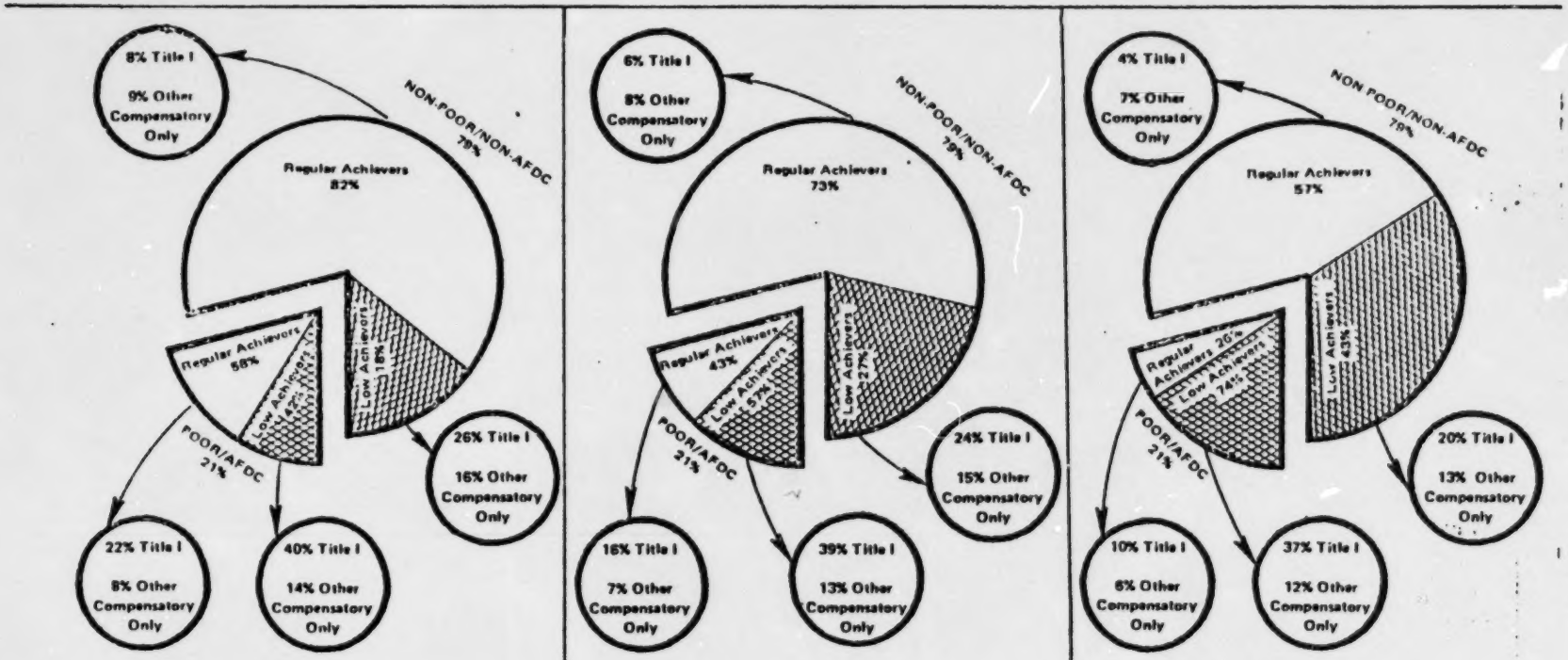
- Utilizing the above relationships, (for students in the lowest fourth or lower half classified as low achievers) for six hypothetical schools with differing concentrations of students from poverty backgrounds, their corresponding concentrations of low achievers would range as follows:

Poverty	Achievement	
Percent of School's Students from Poverty Backgrounds	Percent Who Fall Into Lower One-Fourth of National Achievement Distribution	Percent Who Fall Into Lower One-Half of National Achievement Distrbution
100	50	75
75	42	67
50	35	59
25	28	52
0	20	44

-- Hence, in schools where high concentrations of students from poverty backgrounds are found, there too can be found a high incidence of low achievement. However, substantial concentrations of low achieving students can also be found in schools with low concentrations of poverty students*.

*The correlation between the average achievement of the students in a school and the average income level of their families is .67 whereas the correlation between these same factors at the individual student level is .29. The relationships between these factors can vary widely depending on the level of analysis involved (e.g. individual student, school level, district level, state level, schools or students within a district, districts within a State, etc.). (See Wolf, 1977).

FIGURE 1 – STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL AND SELECTION FOR COMPENSATORY SERVICES BY THEIR FAMILIES' ECONOMIC STATUS USING DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT



Low Achievement includes students in grades two through six who are one or more years below grade level.

Low Achievement includes students in grades one through six who are in the lower one-third of the national achievement percentile distribution.

Low Achievement includes students in grades one through six who are in the lower half of the national achievement percentile distribution.

Poor/AFDC includes children from families below the 1976 Orshansky cut-off points plus children from families receiving AFDC payments plus institutionalized children attending public schools.

2.5 How many students who are from a low-income background and are low achievers are selected for compensatory services.

The following figures show the selection rates for compensatory services for three different definitions of low achievement: (1) one or more years below grade level; (2) lower third of the national achievement distribution; and (3) lower half of the distribution.

- In Figure 1, the large circles are each subdivided into two segments based on the economic status of children's families. The larger segment (labeled NON-POOR/NON-AFDC and representing 79% of the students) represents children from families that are neither poor nor receive AFDC payments. The smaller, detached segment (labeled POOR/AFDC) depicts the remaining 21% of the students who come from families that are classified as either poor or as receiving AFDC payments (or the student resides in a foster home or in an institution for neglected or delinquent children but attends public school).

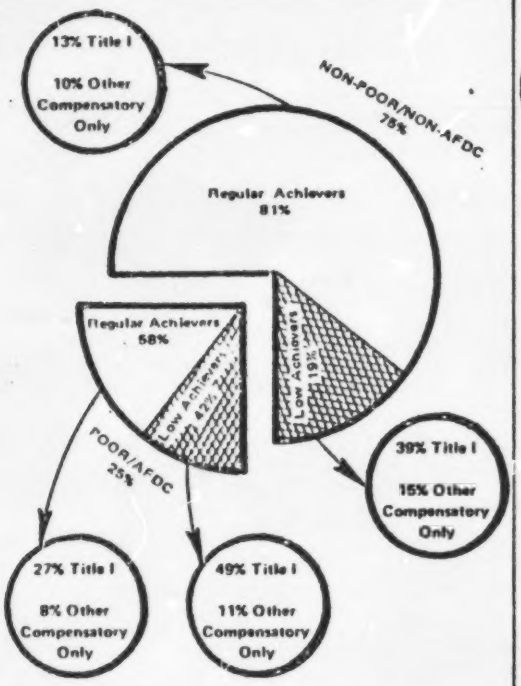
  -- Each of the two segments is further subdivided into a proportion of low achieving and regular achieving students. For example, in the first large circle of Figure 1, using the definition of one or more years below grade level, these proportions are 18% and 82% respectively for the non-low income group, but they are 42% and 57% respectively for the low income group.

  -- For each of these divisions a corresponding small circle indicates the percent of students in that category who are selected to receive compensatory services either from Title I or from some other source of compensatory funds.

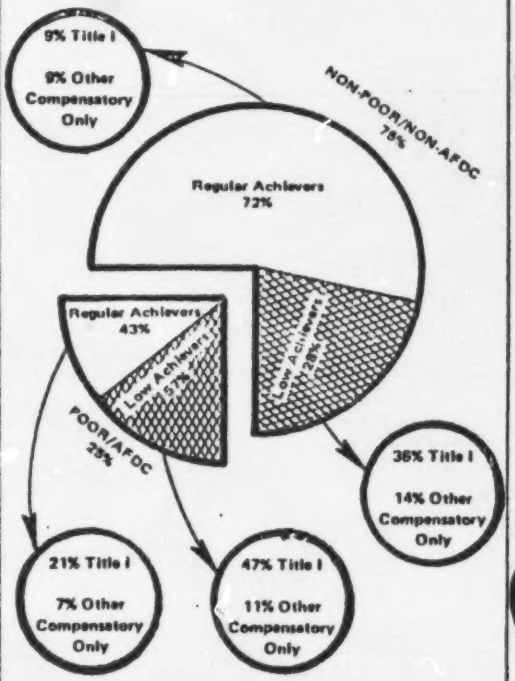
- Examination of the percentages in these circles for each of the different achievement level definitions in Figure 1 shows that Title I's focus is most pronounced on children who are classified as both low income and low achievers. The groups that Title I is focused on next most intensively are low achieving students who are not classified as low income and next, those who are classified as low income but are not low achieving. Consistently lowest is the group of non-low income/non-low achievers.

  -- These results can be contrasted with those for the category of Other Compensatory which has its focus in descending order, on: (1) non-low income/low achievers; (2) low income/low achievers; (3) non-low income/non-low achievers; and (4) low income/non-low achievers.

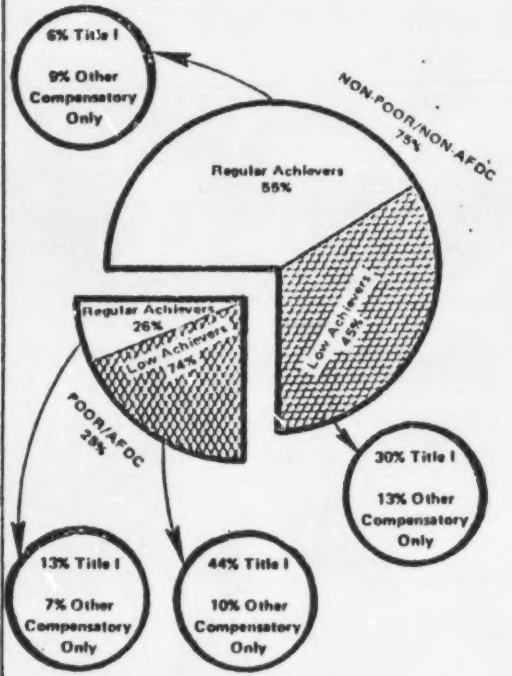
FIGURE 2 – STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL AND SELECTION FOR COMPENSATORY SERVICES
BY THEIR FAMILIES' ECONOMIC STATUS
USING DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT--IN TITLE I SCHOOLS



Low Achievement includes students in grades two through six who are one or more years below grade level.



Low Achievement includes students in grades one through six who are in the lower one-third of the national achievement percentile distribution.



Low Achievement includes students in grades one through six who are in the lower half of the national achievement percentile distribution.

Poor/AFDC includes children from families below the 1976 Orshansky cut-off points plus children from families receiving AFDC payments plus institutionalized children attending public schools.

- Regardless of the definition of low achievement used, almost one-half of the children classified as low income/low achievers are still not selected for any compensatory services. Other data show, furthermore that only 7% of low income/low achieving children attend a school that does not offer any compensatory services supported either from Title I or some other source.

- Depending on the definition of low achievement used, from over one-half to two-thirds of the non-low income/low achievers are still not selected for any services.

- Although the focusing of attention on groups that can be considered the most needy (viz., low income/low achievers and non-low income/low achievers) might be considered good, one should recall that because of their greater absolute number more non-low income than low income children are selected for services from Title I. Under the most stringent definition of low achievement employed, i.e., one or more years below grade level, more regular than low achievers are selected for services under Title I. This was not so for the other achievement definitions.

Are greater proportions of low income and low achieving students selected for compensatory services in Title I schools? Figure 2 presents such comparisons for the same definitions of low achievement as were used in Figure 1. The portions of the circle and their segments are read in the same manner as for Figure 1. As an example, in the first large circle, the reader can observe that 25% of the children in Title I schools are classified as low income (POOR/AFDC) while 75% are non-low income. Among the low income children, 42% are classified as low achievers (using the criterion of one or more years below grade level) and 58% as regular (or non-low) achievers. For the low income/low achievers, 49% are selected for Title I while another 11% are selected for Other Compensatory services. Results for the other categories of students are read in a similar manner.

When portions of the circles for corresponding definitions of low achievement in Figures 1 and 2 are compared, the proportion of low income children increases as do the proportions of students in each category selected for Title I services. This latter increase is greatest for students classified as low achievers and, among the low achievement categories, the increase is greatest for non-low income students. Such results show that the selection process is most sensitive to low achievement in schools that receive Title I funds.

3. How do the numbers and kinds of low income and low achieving students change as the definitions are systematically altered?

The information collected in this study lends itself to an analysis of how the numbers and mix of students would change if the definitions of low income and low achievement were systematically altered. The results of these

analyses are important because they indicate characteristics of the children who just miss being classified as poor or low achieving. However, these analyses should not be regarded as indicating the manner in which alterations in the Title I program would manifest themselves because: (1) the process by which individual students are selected for services is not based on these definitions; and (2) information on district level and on school level allocation procedures, i.e. among schools within a district, are not available for consideration in these analyses.

Several alternative definitions of poverty were used. Among these were: selected percentages of current poverty (e.g. 115, 125, 150 and 200); below 50% of median Family Income; the Title I low income measure as defined in the prior section; and participation in the school free lunch program. As the poverty criteria were expanded the larger number of children classified as below the poverty line included an increasing proportion of majority children, i.e.. an increasing proportion of whites from an English speaking home whose parents have an increasing number of years of education. The definition that employed 150% of current poverty produced a classification of students into 29.3% below and 70.7% above the poverty line. These percentages corresponded very closely to those resulting from two other definitions: 50% of median Family Income; and, participation in the free lunch program. One might then regard the former as a close substitute for the latter two definitions.*

Four alternative definitions of low achievement were used: (1) one year or more below grade level; (2) bottom 25%; (3) bottom 33%; and (4) bottom 50% of the achievement percentile distribution. The one year or more below grade level definition classified almost the same percent of children as low achievers as did the "bottom 25%". Because the composition of students in terms of their minority status, language in the home, parental education and geographic locale were also very similar for these two definitions, the latter might be considered a desirable substitute for the former since the "bottom 25%" allows for the inclusion of first graders. As the definition of low achievement is expanded from the bottom 25% through the bottom 33% to the bottom 50%, the greater numbers of students classified as low achievers includes an increasing proportion of majority children, i.e. an increasing proportion of whites from English speaking homes whose parents have an increasing number of years of education.

When both poverty and achievement definitions were expanded simultaneously, the numbers of students classified as low income/low achievers were approximately twice what an expanded definition of either one alone would produce, i.e. 200% of current poverty and lower 50% on achievement compared with current poverty and lower 25% on achievement.

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*It should also be noted that the percentages of students classified as current low income by the Title I allocation formula (poor/AFDC/institutionalized children) correspond very closely to the percent of students classified as poor using 115% of current poverty as the dividing line (20.8% for the former varsus 20.7% for the latter).

For comparison purposes, a number of these analyses were conducted for schools that receive Title I funds. They showed that for each expanded definition of poverty and/or low achievement, proportionately more students were classified as below the poverty/low achievement line in Title I schools than was so for all students, i.e., students in all schools whether or not their school received Title I funds.

The results for some of these analyses can be illustrated by an example given in Table 1. In this example two definitions of low income and of low achievement are employed to see how they affect the way students who are selected for Title I services are classified. In the first column the definitions employed are those of the current Title I allocation criteria for low income and one or more years below grade level for low achievement. In the second column the definitions employed are twice the current poverty level (viz. 200%) for low income and below the national median for low achievement. The drastic shift in the percentages for these two columns indicates that most of the students who are selected for Title I services can be regarded as "near poor" or actually poor in their income status and "below average" in their achievement status.

Table 1: Number and Percent of Elementary School Students Who are Selected for Title I By Two Definitions of Income and Achievement Status

Income/Achievement Status	Percent Selected for Title I*	
	Title I Allocation Criteria/One or More Years Below Grade Level	200% of Current Poverty/Below National Median
Low Income/Low Achievement	23	59
Non-Low Income/Low Achievement	25	25
Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	18	8
Non-low Income/Non-Low Achievement	34	8
	100.0	100.0

* The first column employs the definitions of the Title I allocation criteria for low income, which is about 115% of current poverty and one or more years below grade level for low achievement. The second column employs the definitions of below 200% of current poverty for low income and below the national median for low achievement.

4. How might current practices be improved?

To begin to answer such a question one needs to focus on practices at each level of the funds disbursement process that might lead to services being provided to the one student group that all might agree Title I should not be serving given its current legislative requirements--students who are both non-low income and not educationally needy. In addition, others might feel that the provision of services to students who are low income but not educationally needy might also be questioned. (For purposes of this study, educationally needy has been defined as low achievement in terms of performance on a standardized achievement test.)

Let us examine practices at these different levels.

- County Allocations

As noted earlier, funds are allocated to the county level based in part on information from the Decennial Census. Such information can be in use even after it is as much as 14 years out of date given that income data collected is for the preceding year and it may require three years to get new Census data properly organized for such purposes. In such a period of time the income status of a county could change drastically. A recently completed study of the effects of using more recent Census like income data on Title I allocations at the State level, i.e., the total that their counties could receive, showed that sixteen States would lose one-fifth or more of their current allocation while eight others would gain by amounts in the same range (Miller, 1977). With the advent of the mid-Decennial census in 1985, allocations can be made with income information that will be at its worst seven to eight years out of date rather than the current 14 year figure. If other means can be devised to make the allocation information even more current, then the gap between the actual and the Congressionally intended recipients can be reduced even further.

- Sub-County Allocations

Currently, 46 States are involved in resolving how a county's funds should be apportioned among its local school districts (NIE, September, 1977). The use of data in ways other than that empasized by the Federal formula (e.g., sole reliance on AFDC data as compared with number of children from poverty plus two-thirds of AFDC) was shown to alter the allocation patterns (NIE, September, 1977). (It should be noted that data directly comparable to that used in the Federal formula may not be obtainable at the sub-county level.) Any changes that could be made to standardize the sources and currency of data used at this level, or that would enable allocations to be made directly to the school district level, would also greatly facilitate Congressional intent.

- Allocations Within School Districts

Ninety percent of all operating school districts in the U.S. receive some Title I funds (NIE, 1976). As a result, about two-thirds of all public elementary schools in the U.S. receive Title I funds (OPBE, 1977; NIE, September, 1977). How appropriate is this two-thirds figure? One set of considerations suggests that it is the result of prescribed practices while another suggests that it is a result of the lack of adherence to prescribed practices. Let us review each in turn for they bear importantly on the sequence of steps that would be taken to improve on the numbers of poor low achieving and non-poor low achieving children served.

Several considerations suggest that the two-thirds figures is the result of prescribed practices: (1) there is a high percentage of school districts with small number of students (NCES, 1977) -- the limited number of attendance areas in such districts could result in their only school or few schools qualifying for Title I funds; (2) when all schools in a district are ranked the elementary schools are more likely to be above the district wide average than are the secondary schools. This is so because secondary school attendance areas encompass a wider range of students and as a result have a lower concentration of students from poverty backgrounds than do many of the elementary areas; and (3) exceptions to district ranking procedures are allowed under certain circumstances (called no wide variance, 30 percent rule; previously eligible attendance areas; and, eligibility by actual enrollment) and these exceptions would increase the number of Title I eligible schools; and, (4) program reviews by the Title I staff indicate that prescribed practices are being followed.*

The results of another recently completed study suggest that this two-thirds figure might be too large (NIE, September, 1977). This study showed that the districts were using a number of different poverty measures (e.g. percent of students in the free lunch program, percent of students from families receiving AFDC, etc.) and suggested that if a school ranked above the district wide average on any <u>one</u> of these, then the district designated it as a Title I eligible school. Since these different measures are not perfectly related, more schools would be designated as Title I eligible than if any one single measure or a composite of all of them were used.

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* Recent evidence from hearings associated with the renewal of Title I showed that 50% of all Title I districts are comprised of a single attendance area while another 10% exercise either the no-wide variance or the 30% exceptions. Only 37% of all Title I districts engage in the selection of project areas (see Hearings, Part 16, 195-197).

If the two-thirds figure is the result of prescribed practices, then the ways to improve on the number of poor low achieving and non-poor low achieving children served* would be to: (1) tighten up student selection procedures at the school level; and (2) expand the program to serve those students judged to be needy but who are not now receiving services.** If, on the other hand, this two-thirds figure is too large, then the ways to improve on the number of low achieving children served would be to: (1) make within district allocation procedures conform more closely to prescribed practices;*** (2) tighten up student selection procedures at the school level; and (3) expand the program to serve students who are judged to be needy once these improved within district allocation procedures are in effect.

- Serving the Most Needy Students at Recipient Schools

Prior analyses of all students versus only those in schools that received Title I funds i.e., the comparisons of Figures 1 and 2, showed that proportionately more students overall as well as of each type (e.g., low income/low achiever, etc.) were selected for services in Title I schools. Further, in these comparisions, the differences in the proportions of students selected were always greater for low achievement than for low income. The selection process in Title I schools thus appeared to be very sensitive to the inclusion of low achieving students as assessed by their performance on a standardized achievement test. Although there are no fixed program criteria by which to judge the adequacy of this selection process, later reports from this study will examine the kinds of services students receive compared to their economic and educational status, prior compensatory experiences, and need for compensatory services as judged by their teachers.

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* Aside from making the information used for allocation purposes more current and more comparable.

** A recent study showed that only two-thirds of the children judged to be educationally needy in Title I eligible schools were receiving services (NIE, July 1977).

*** Clearly, to the extent that these practices give rise to this overinclusiveness, the use of a single measure or composite would greatly reduce such tendencies. Further, in light of the fact that our earlier analyses showed that some poverty measures were more inclusive than others, these practices would be improved to an even greater extent, if the same kinds of information were used, with respect to their type and currency, by districts in identifying their Title I eligible schools. Finally, if the data used were identical to that used in making county and subcounty level allocations and all were more current, then the intent of Congress might be better fulfilled.

Conclusions

Compensatory services in general and Title I services in particular can be regarded as moderately well-focused on individual children who can be judged needy, primarily in terms of their low achievement but also in terms of their low income backgrounds. However, there are many students not now being served who can be judged needy and some who can be judged not needy but are being served. The focusing of services on needy students can be improved by: (1) establishing and maintaining a uniform, current data base for allocations to the county and district level and for project area selection; (2) tightening up intradistrict allocation procedures to the extent possible; (3) expanding the program to serve greater numbers of needy students; and (4) tightening up intraschool student selection procedures to the extent possible.

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STUDENT ECONOMIC BACKGROUND, ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND SELECTION FOR COMPENSATORY SERVICES

APRIL 1978

Executive Summary

U.S. Department of Health,
Education, and Welfare
Office of Education
Office of Planning, Budgeting
and Evaluation

Background and Methodology

"How many economically and educationally disadvantaged children do and do not receive services from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?" In response to this question asked by Congress, the Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation of the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) conducted a special study*. It involved (1) a nationally representative sample of 242 elementary schools (those having one or more of grades 1-6), (2) the documentation in these schools of students' receipt of regular and compensatory services (provided by Title I and other programs), (3) the administration of achievement tests during school year 1976-77 to all children in these schools to ascertain their educational performance level, (4) the determination through interviews with parents of 14,158 students of each family's economic status, and (5) the linking of the three primary student descriptors on an individual child basis: his/her achievement level, the economic characteristics of his/her family, and his/her receipt of educational services.

Before examining the results of this study we should recall that Title I funds are disbursed through counties and school districts to schools on the basis of economic criteria. In the schools that receive these funds (those that have the highest concentrations of children from poverty backgrounds), supplementary educational services are provided to the most educationally needy students without regard to their economic background. Hence, both economic and educational criteria enter into the determination of which children are ulitmately selected for services.

FINDINGS

The results showed that of the 20 million public elementary students in grades 1-6, the following percentages are selected to receive compensatory services:

OVERALL: 15% are selected to receive services from Title I while another 10% are selected to receive compensatory services supported by other Federal, State and local sources of funds.

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* The study, required by Section 417(a)(2) of the General Education Provisions Act as amended by Section 506(a)(3)(c) of P.L. 93-380, was conducted under instructions to USOE by the System Development Corporation of Santa Monica, California, and Decima Research of Santa Ana, California. It forms part of a larger study which follows the same students over a period of years to ascertain how they benefit from their compensatory services. For more details see the Technical Summary and Technical Report in the List of References.

By Income Status

- 4.2 million children are from low income backgrounds* -- 29% of these students are selected for Title I while another 11% are selected for compensatory services supported from other sources.
- 15.8 million are from non-low income backgrounds -- 11% of these students are selected for Title I while another 10% are selected for compensatory services from other sources.

By Achievement Status**

- One-third of the children are classified as low achievers -- 30% of these students are selected for Title I while another 14% are selected for compensatory services from other sources.
- Two-thirds are classified as non-low achievers -- 7% of these students are selected for Title I while another 8% are selected for compensatory services from other sources.

Income/Achievement Status

Income/Achievement Status	Total Number of Students (millions)	Percent (by Row) Selected for Compensatory Services from: Title I	Other Sources
Low Income/Low Achievement	2.4	39	13
Non-Low Income/Low Achievement	4.2	24	15
Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	1.8	16	7
Non-Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	11.6	6	8

* Low income as defined by the Title I allocation criteria includes students from families classified as either poor under the Orshansky index or as receiving AFDC payments or the student resides in a foster home or in a local institution for neglected or delinquent children but attends public school.

** Achievement status was determined by the administration of the Reading and Mathematics sections of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. Various definitions of low achievement were used. The one reported here is based on students classified into the lower third versus the upper two-thirds of the National Achievement Percentile distribution.

Other Results

- The relationship between low income and low achievement was strong enough to show that where there were high concentrations of low income children, there too one could expect to find high concentrations of low achieving children.

  - However, substantial concentrations of low achieving students could also be found where there were very small concentrations of low income children.

- Alternative definitions of low income and low achievement were examined to see how they affected the way students were classified. In the example below, those students selected for Title I are classified under the first column using the Title I definition of low income* and one or more years below grade level for low achievement. In the second column, these same students are classified using twice the current poverty limit as a definition of low income and using a ranking below the national median (50th percentile) as a definition of low achievement.

Income/Achievement Status	Percent of Title I Students Selected for Services	
	Title I Low Income/ One or More Years Below Grade Level	Twice Current Poverty/ Below National Median
Low-Income/Low Achievement	23	59
Non-Low-Income/Low Achievement	25	25
Low Income/Non-Low Achievement	18	8
Non-Low-Income/Non-Low Achievement	34	8
	100.0	100.0

The shifts in these percentages from the first to second column show that most of the Title I students are either low achievers or are below average in their achievement and come from poverty or near poverty backgrounds.

In sum, compensatory services in general and Title I services in particular can be regarded as moderately well-focused on individual children who can be judged needy, primarily in terms of their low achievement but also in terms of their low income backgrounds. However, there are many students not now being served who can be judged needy and some who can be judged not needy but are being served. The focusing of services on needy students can be improved by: (1) establishing and maintaining a uniform, current data base for allocations to the county and district level and for project area selection purposes; (2) tightening up intradistrict allocation procedures to the extent possible; (3) expanding the program to serve greater numbers of needy students; and (4) tightening up intraschool student selection procedures to the extent possible.**

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* See the footnote on the prior page for this definition.

** See the Technical Summary for the basis of these recommendations.

List of References

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